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April 24, 2020

The Honorable Robert Wilkie  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20420

Ms. Ann R. Brown  
Director  
Atlanta VA Healthcare System  
1670 Clairmont Road  
Decatur, GA 30033

Dear Secretary Wilkie and Director Brown,

I write to express my concerns for both patients and employees at the Atlanta VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Georgia's Fifth Congressional District, as well as their impacted families.

I understand that the COVID-19 pandemic presents several obstacles to safely treating patients at the VAMC and their facilities. Given the magnitude of the VA mission to serve and care for our nation's veterans and their families, it is imperative that the VAMC applies diligence and care in managing the safety and well-being of those in care.

In recent weeks, my office heard from the families of those who had loved ones being cared for at Eagles Nest Living Community Center, a facility under the Atlanta VAMC. In response to COVID-19, many of these families were shocked to find their loved ones relocated without proper notice. I imagine the fear that gripped their hearts as they learned that their loved ones would be transported—some hours away, in the wake of a pandemic. Many worried if their loved ones would receive adequate treatment and emotional support.

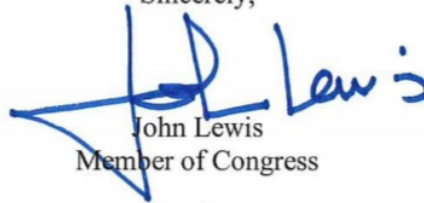
As you know, recent reports surfaced about VAMC healthcare and essential workers feeling unsafe and unprotected on the front lines. They expressed concerns regarding the lack of protective equipment required to work, and a concern that safety measures are not being enforced to ensure the well-being of staff. Now, more than ever, healthcare and essential workers need unwavering support. A failure to prioritize protections for those working on the front lines will inevitably impact the care and treatment of veterans.

These concerns are not unwarranted. Veterans and families receiving care in VA facilities must have confidence and trust in the system. In every situation, the exercise of compassion and care can make even the most difficult circumstances bearable. Those, who served our country, and their families deserve greater respect.

Secretary Wilkie  
Director Brown  
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As always, I appreciate your full and fair consideration of these views and look forward to hearing about the solutions you will implement to protect healthcare services, patients, and essential workers at the VAMC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Lewis". The signature is stylized, with a large "J" and "L" and a cursive "Lewis".

John Lewis  
Member of Congress